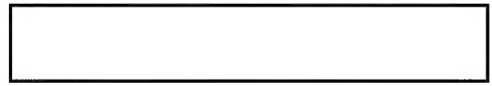


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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

State Department review completed

NSA review completed

Information as of 1600
9 October 1966

ARMY review(s) completed.

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PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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HIGHLIGHTS

In four reported air engagements over North Vietnam during the weekend, at least two Communist planes were destroyed by US Navy pilots with no US losses inflicted by the MIGs. The Cabinet crisis in South Vietnam was not resolved over the weekend, but many influential government officials are working hard to negotiate the differences between the southern-oriented dissidents and their northern rivals.

I. Military Developments in South Vietnam:

No significant contact was reported by US or allied forces involved in ground operations in South Vietnam over the weekend (Para. 1). Operation IRVING in Binh Dinh Province is continuing with enemy losses now standing at 1,121 dead, 628 captured, and 1,407 suspects detained (Para. 2).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

Government leaders are working hard to reconcile the six southern-oriented ministers who have submitted their resignations with the government, but a solution is not yet apparent (Paras. 1-3). The work of the rules and credentials committees of the constituent assembly is progressing (Para. 4). The fate of article 20 of the assembly's founding decree is still an issue (Para. 5). One of the candidates for elected leadership of the assembly, La Thanh Nghe, appears to have compromised his chances through political irregularities (Para. 6).

III. North Vietnamese Military Developments:

In four reported air engagements over North Vietnam, at least two Communist planes were destroyed by US Navy pilots with no US losses to the MIGs (Paras. 1-4).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Hanoi has denounced the Manila Conference, Secretary of Defense McNamara's trip to South Vietnam, and British Foreign Secretary Brown's proposal for a Vietnam settlement (Paras. 1-3). Peking has denounced Brown's proposal in predictably bitter terms (Para. 4).

Indonesian mediation efforts in the Vietnam war are discussed (Paras. 9-11).

VI. Other Major Aspects: The latest road watch reports indicate that the increase in truck traffic in the Mu Gia Pass area which began in early September is continuing (Paras. 1-3).

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I. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. No significant contact was reported by US or allied forces involved in ground operations in South Vietnam on 8 and 9 October. In the First Corps area South Vietnamese marines in Operation LAM SON 318 reported the discovery of 64 Communist dead, apparently the victims of US air strikes. In Operation PRAIRIE US Marines reported finding graves containing the bodies of 50 enemy troops. Communist losses in the Quang Tri Province battle now total 992 dead.

2. In Binh Dinh Province US, Korean, and South Vietnamese forces involved in Operation IRVING continue to close the ring on the remaining elements of the 12th PAVN and 2nd VC regiments. MACV (J-2) estimates that the combined Viet Cong/North Vietnamese force has been badly hurt and is seriously disorganized. Combat strength in some Communist units has already been reduced by 40-50 percent. The allied forces have now accounted for 1,121 enemy dead, 628 captured, and 1,407 suspects detained. Ten US soldiers have been killed and 60 wounded.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The cabinet crisis was not resolved over the weekend, but many influential government officials are diligently trying to negotiate the differences between the southern-oriented dissidents and their northern rivals. The six ministers who presented a letter of resignation to Premier Ky met with Chief of State Thieu as scheduled on the evening of 7 October. Thieu asked them to reconsider their resignations in the greater interests of the country.

2. Ky has attempted to mollify the six ministers by suspending the offending Nhan Dan newspaper and by accepting the resignation of Health Secretary Kha, who, in collaboration with police director Loan, originally inspired the southerners' ire by resorting to the heavy-handed treatment of a southern colleague. Reporting has not indicated whether the six ministers will be satisfied with those mild concessions. It is probable, however, that they will insist on some sort of censure of the northern-born instigators, primarily General Loan. If further concessions are not forthcoming, they might force the acceptance of their resignations.

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Constituent Assembly Developments

4. The constituent assembly recessed for the weekend, according to a press report. The assembly administrative officer told a US Embassy officer on 6 October that the procedural rules committee has written seven of the assembly's internal regulations and that it should complete its work by the end of this week (week of 9-15 October). He also felt that all but two of the 23 delegates whose seats have been contested will be validated by the credentials committee. When this work is finished, the assembly will be able to elect its permanent officers.

5. A consensus of opinion among the deputies toward article 20, which gives the Directorate a revisionary power over the draft constitution, has still not formed. However, Tran Van An, the most influential civilian Directorate member, told a US Embassy officer that several younger deputies will try to form an assembly resolution asking the GVN to declare the controversial article null and void.

6. There are still no clear-cut front-runners for positions of assembly president and secretary general. However, one of the possible candidates, La Thanh Nghe, appears to have compromised his chances for either post by involving himself in what has been termed the first assembly scandal.

Nghe, for unknown reasons, induced the second winner on his election slate to resign from the assembly, paying him 500,000 Vietnamese piasters in the process. Nghe then moved the third man on his slate into the deposed second man's place. The story that is going around in the assembly is that the second winner did not choose to resign but was forced to do so by Nghe. Another assembly deputy has reportedly confirmed the information.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. US aircraft encountered significant DRV fighter opposition this weekend while striking targets in the vicinity of Hanoi. In four reported engagements at least two Communist planes were destroyed by US Navy pilots--one jet being brought down by cannon fire from a propeller-driven A-1H Skyraider. There were no US losses to the MIGs.

2. On 8 October four F-105s flying an armed reconnaissance mission 21 miles north of Hanoi were attacked by two MIG-17s as they were making a low-level bomb run. The North Vietnamese fighters made two firing passes but the Thunderchiefs released their ordnance on target and escaped without injury. At the same time four other F-105s were intercepted by three MIG-21s after attacking a target 18 miles northwest of Hanoi. Fire was exchanged but no hits were made by either side.

3. During a US Navy strike on the Phu Ly railroad yard an F4B was lost to unknown causes. Both crewmembers successfully ejected and were sighted on the ground, apparently in good condition. A rescue helicopter and four A-1H aircraft dispatched to recover the downed airmen were jumped by four Communist fighters and were forced to abandon the rescue operation. In the ensuing air battle the A-1Hs destroyed one and damaged a second of the DRV aircraft with 20-mm. fire. The returning Skyraider pilots described the DRV jets in explicit detail, identifying them as SU-7 Fitters, a type of Soviet-built interceptor not previously sighted in North Vietnam. There is no corroborative evidence to suggest the presence of these aircraft in the DRV air order of battle.

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4. Several hours later a US Navy F8 encountered two MIG-21s 20 miles southwest of Hanoi. The Crusader fired two missiles, both of which exploded on the Communist fighter. The North Vietnamese pilot ejected as the right wing separated from his aircraft. Before the air engagements of 9 October only three MIG-21s are known to have been shot down by US fighters. Since the first encounter with Communist MIGs over North Vietnam on 3 April 1965, US pilots are believed to have destroyed 29 DRV aircraft. Ten US planes have been lost as a result of North Vietnamese air activity.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. In a variety of propaganda statements over the weekend the North Vietnamese offered an across the board condemnation of the upcoming Manila Conference, Secretary McNamara's trip to South Vietnam, and British Foreign Secretary Brown's proposal for a Vietnam settlement. Speaking at a banquet on 7 October in Hanoi, DRV Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh termed the Manila Conference a "trick," claiming that it was simply a "war council to discuss the prosecution and intensification of the US aggressive war" in coordination with the "new deceitful peace campaign of the US." The foreign minister derided US offers of peace negotiations and unconditional discussions and voiced Hanoi's standard position in demanding that "the only correct solution to the Vietnam question was for the US to accept the four-point stand of the DRV Government and prove this through practical deeds and stop for good and unconditionally its bombing raids and other acts against the DRV."

2. A lengthy Hanoi commentary on 7 October directed to South Vietnam offered a sharply critical assessment of the Secretary of Defense's visit to South Vietnam. Claiming that subsequent to each of his several trips to South Vietnam "new escalation aimed at enlarging the war" took place, Hanoi asserted that the purpose of this latest trip was to increase the "US expeditionary force to 400,000 men in order to launch a new counteroffensive during the coming dry season." The broadcast warned that this trip would only "mark another greater and more permanent defeat on the part of the US imperialists in the days ahead."

3. Hanoi's initial public reaction to Brown's peace plan for Vietnam came in an 8 October domestic broadcast which derisively termed his proposals as a repeat of Ambassador Goldberg's 22 September UN speech. The commentary placed the points raised by Brown concerning mutual withdrawal, mutual de-escalation,

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and international control alongside similar points raised in the 22 September statement to "prove" that the British proposal was a "twin" of that made by the US at the UN.

Peking Denounces Brown Proposal

4. Peking condemned the British Foreign Secretary's proposals in predictably bitter terms. A lengthy NCNA commentary of 7 October accused Brown of following "US gangster logic" in holding Hanoi responsible for continued escalation, and claimed that he is pressing for a cease-fire only so as to give the US "a breathing spell." Peking termed international control in implementing a settlement "tantamount to foreign control" and derided the British Foreign Secretary's suggestion that the ICC be enlarged. As in much recent Chinese Communist commentary on Vietnam, Peking attempted to document its allegations of Soviet-US collusion, and even went so far as to charge that Brown's proposals were issued "in response to the new Soviet-US peace offensive."

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Additional Information on Czech Visit to Hanoi

6. Additional information on the recent visit of the Czechoslovak party and government delegation to North Vietnam has been provided the US Embassy in Prague by a Czech journalist. According to the report, prior to the delegation's departure for Hanoi North Vietnamese officials insisted that "for security reasons" the visit be given no publicity. The Czech officials reportedly refused to go along with this request and the trip did receive appropriate though not extensive publicity.

7. The difference of opinion on the issue of publicity may in part reflect Hanoi's desire to avoid giving undue recognition to visiting East European groups in the light of the current Chinese coolness toward the Eastern bloc, which was evident in the curt treatment afforded the Czech group as it passed through Peking. A Rumanian delegation in Hanoi from 1 to 5 October received no publicity and a Bulgarian group currently en route to Hanoi has thus far received minimal public notice.

8. The journalist also reported that the delegation felt that its reception by the DRV Worker's Party was "fairly cool." This feeling is a possible reflection of the fact that DRV Party First Secretary Le Duan, who usually meets with visiting foreign party delegations, apparently failed to see the group while it was in North Vietnam.

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10. Indonesian interest in playing a mediatory role in the Vietnam war probably stems from a feeling that as a neutral Southeast Asian state it is in a good position to intercede with Hanoi and thereby enhance its own prestige. Speaking in Tokyo on 7 October, Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik stated that both Communist and free world nations had asked Indonesia to participate actively in seeking peace in Vietnam but refused to reveal what nations these were or what steps Indonesia has taken.

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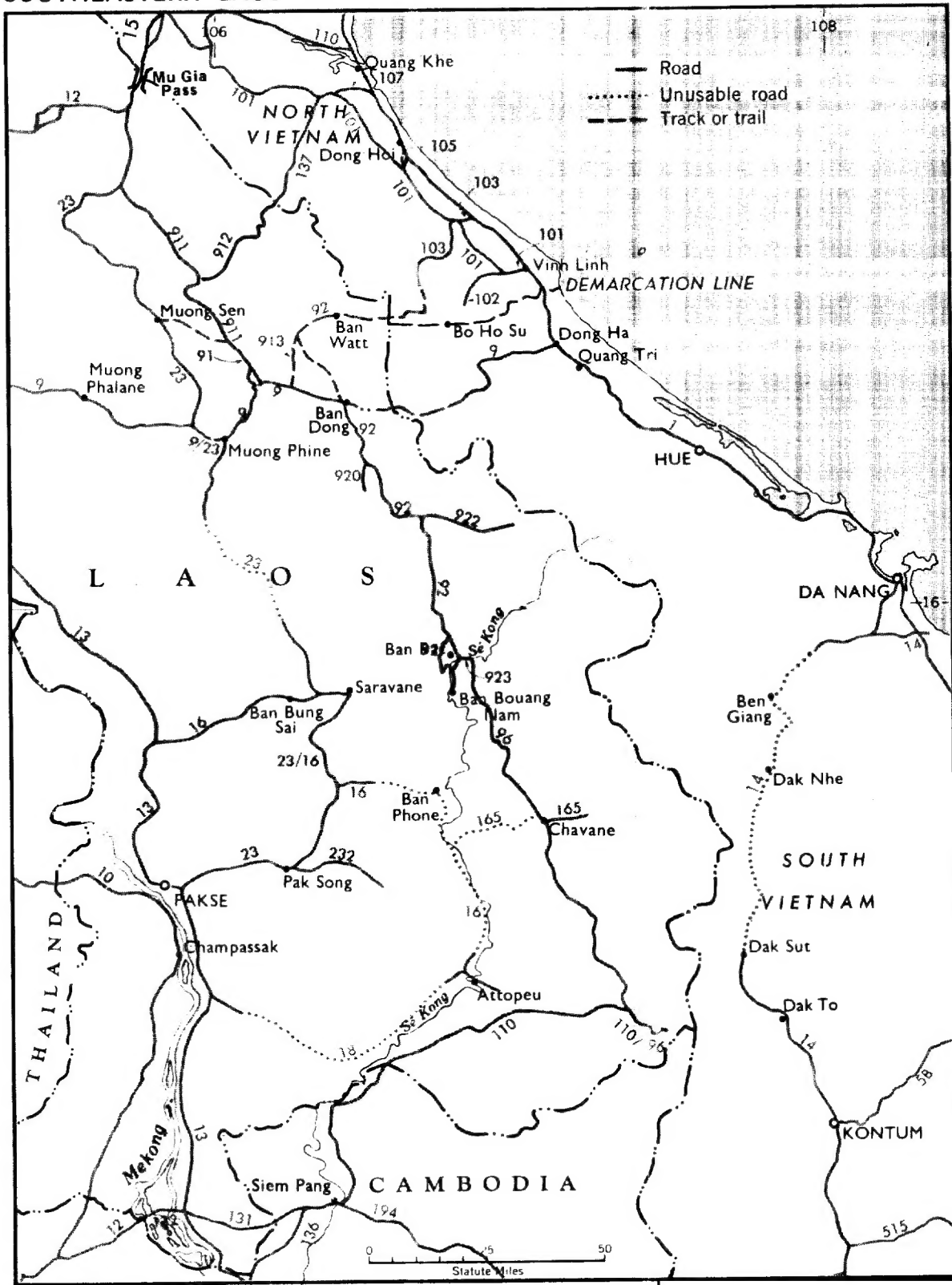
11. It remains highly doubtful that the Vietnamese Communists will accede to any mediation efforts by the Indonesians. In the past, both Hanoi and Liberation Front propaganda has been highly critical not only of the present Indonesian Government but also of third country efforts toward resolving the Vietnamese question which do not entirely conform to the Communist position on a negotiated settlement.

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. The latest road watch reports indicate that the increase in truck traffic in the Mu Gia Pass area which began in early September is continuing. Between 27 September and 4 October, 93 trucks--12 loaded with livestock--reportedly moved south along Route 15 in North Vietnam toward the pass. During the same period, 88 trucks--28 loaded with empty fuel drums--moved north.
2. It is likely that the traffic through the pass has been in support of road repair work preparatory to the end of the rainy season less than a month away. Photography and reports from watch teams and local residents indicate that the Laos road network leading to South Vietnam is generally still impassible due to weather damage. On the other hand, increased road repair activity has been reported recently on the Laotian side of Mu Gia Pass.
3. The current usability of Route 912--the other road into the Laos panhandle from North Vietnam--cannot be determined. However, photography up to mid-September suggests that this route is also being repaired in anticipation of the end of the rainy season.

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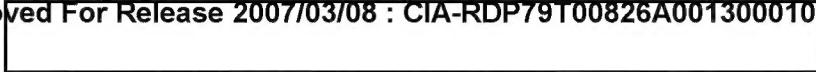
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